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"A Heightened Sense of Risk": A Covid FAQ with 300 Sources



So [this](#) is happening:

"I was told I could not put HEPAs around the office because it 'created a heightened sense of risk.'" Last year we were told to stop fearmongering. Now we're being told to stop trying to protect ourselves, or each other. At least they get to keep HEPAs in their own offices.

That's kind of them, I guess.

Meanwhile, over at the [In-N-Out](#), you can't even wear an N95 mask anymore because the owners want their employees to showcase their "smiles." Customer service is more important than common sense.

Some of us know, the pandemic isn't over. A pandemic doesn't have to last one or two years. It can last several. It can last a decade. Plagues don't go away on their own. They don't obey schedules or election cycles. They go away when the public invests in health.

We answer the same questions over and over. We show the mounting evidence. We debunk myth after myth, only for them to resurrect. It can get tedious. Sometimes indifference can overwhelm us and make us question our sanity. That's why last year I started keeping and [organizing a list of sources](#). I use these sources when I need to convince someone to take Covid seriously.

Over the last year, my list has grown to nearly 300 sources. I've made categories and subcategories for Long Covid, masks, the immune system, and a list of other voices worth listening to.

I also decided to make an FAQ.

Here it is:

Isn't the pandemic officially over?

Governments ended their states of emergency this year, but that means very little. They're not testing, and they're not alerting the public to new variants. A Yale immunologist recently [said](#), "We are not done with Covid, not even close." Covid is still spreading around the world. Most at-home tests [aren't](#) that reliable, and even PCR tests can miss new variants.

You could catch Covid and wouldn't even know.

So what, right?

Hasn't Covid become mild?

Covid is causing waves of brain damage, heart disease, organ failure, and chronic illness. It's doing this damage in mild and asymptomatic cases. It doesn't matter how sick you feel or how fast you recover. Being vaccinated provides a minimal amount of protection against these risks. Some studies say vaccines and boosters lower your risk by roughly [15-20](#) percent. Even the CDC estimates that as many as 1 in 5 Americans now have a health condition because of Covid.

Covid can infect every organ in the body. The authors of a major recent study on Long Covid describe its oncoming impact as "[unfathomable](#)" to patients

and healthcare workers. Every time you catch Covid, your risk goes up.

You can see the research [here](#).

Don't viruses naturally get milder over time?

You might've heard the idea that viruses evolve to become milder. It's based on the law of declining virulence, a debunked theory offered by Theobald Smith in the late 19th century. He was talking about cows and ticks.

As Stanford Biology alum Vivian Lam writes, [it's false](#). Many viruses have actually evolved to become [more deadly](#). The flu's severity fluctuates over time. Experts have seen that Covid itself has been getting [more lethal](#) and immune evasive since Omicron, not more mild.

It's not linear.

Why should I worry about catching Covid now?

Several major studies have found that Covid causes severe long-term and permanent brain damage, even in "mild" cases.

You can see the research [here](#).

Covid can cause blood clots, strokes, and heart attacks.

You can see the research [here](#).

Covid can also cause several types of cancer.

You can see the research [here](#).

Why should I worry about my kids getting Covid?

Children don't appear to get as sick with Covid, but appearances are deceiving. They face almost the same risk of long-term illness and disease. Now that schools have spent a year or even two years back to "normal," everyone from teachers to pediatricians are noticing the impact of Covid on younger age groups. Long Covid is impacting [one in every six](#) kids now. In severe cases, children who once did well in school can't even do [basic math](#).

Last year, the media circulated a number of myths about children and the pandemic, including the notion that lockdowns had caused a mental health crisis. Research is now showing that Covid infection is [contributing much more](#) to their mental and emotional distress than everyone assumed.

Some research has shown children's immune systems don't even remember Covid, so they don't develop lasting immunity.

You can see the research [here](#).

What about immunity debt?

Several immunologists and health institutions have debunked the idea of immunity debt. On an individual level, it's a myth. Health experts have also explained that our immune systems don't require exposure to pathogens.

They require exposure to microbes.

Children develop their immune systems by increasing the diversity of their microbiomes, which means playing outside and eating a variety of foods. Gut health plays a large role in your immune system.

It has nothing to do with "training" it through illness.

You can see the research [here](#).

So why is everyone still getting sick so often?

Covid basically turns your immune system upside down. For some people, it causes dysregulation. In others, it causes lasting damage. Studies have found that Covid overstimulates your T cells and causes them to burn out. They've also found that Covid attacks and disables several other types of immune cells. It even leaves an imprint or "backdoor" for future variants.

It's unsettling, but some researchers have drawn comparisons between Covid and HIV in terms of its immune damage.

You can see the research [here](#).

Don't vaccines protect against severe illness?

Studies on vaccine effectiveness have confirmed that boosters are waning faster, providing anywhere from 50–70 percent effectiveness against severe disease, and even less against long-lasting damage. That's a far cry from the 90 percent effectiveness we were promised when they first came out. Recently, a well-known doctor named Bob Wachter casually mentioned that

vaccines and boosters only offer a few months of reasonable protection. The current administration seems to know that [we need better vaccines](#), but they can't offer a delivery date.

You can see the research [here](#).

But excess deaths are down, isn't that good?

Several media outlets have presented misleading statistics about the excess death rate. Excess deaths haven't dropped to "normal." The CDC changed how they calculate excess mortality by including pandemic deaths. They raised their predictions. They also went back and made them retroactive, all the way to the start of the pandemic. So the drop in excess is artificial. It's not real.

Here's the [evidence](#).

I thought masks didn't work?

A review of studies got a lot of media attention for declaring that masks and mask mandates didn't work. After getting called out, the publisher issued a partial retraction and apology, which you can find [here](#).

The bottom line is that cloth and surgical masks don't provide the best protection against airborne viruses like Covid.

N95 masks do.

There's a big difference between N95 masks and other types of masks. Not only do they fit better, but they come with an electrostatic charge that helps them trap a range of particles. They consistently trap 95 percent of small airborne particles. They're not magic. You have to use them effectively.

There's a substantial amount of [research](#) and [science](#) to explain why transmission and infection rates go down with widespread masking.

You can see the research [here](#).

So you're saying we should mask forever?

We wouldn't have to mask as often if building owners would invest in clean air. The government provided billions of dollars to states for this exact purpose. Unfortunately, many states didn't use it.

The rich also spent a lot of Covid relief money on themselves, and it's considered one of the [biggest frauds in history](#).

We should insist on clear air.

It's a basic right.

Isn't it expensive to clean the air?

Air quality experts know that it's not a huge financial burden to upgrade the air quality, and the cost pales in comparison to employees who are constantly out sick while developing long-term health problems. Economists have put the looming cost of Long Covid in the [trillions of dollars](#).

There are a variety of ways to clean the air.

You can see the research [here](#).

Aren't you being kind of negative?

Covid still presents a significant risk to everyone, regardless of their health or vaccination status. It's an airborne virus. We know that N95 masks and air purifiers significantly reduce these risks. These are facts.

Facts can't be positive or negative.

They simply exist.

Shouldn't we just live our lives?

Long Covid is now the [third leading neurological disorder](#) in the U.S. For many patients, it feels [worse than stage 4 cancer](#). If you or someone you love develop a severe case of Long Covid like an estimated 10 percent of the population, you won't be living your life. You'll be suffering.

And dying.

I'm healthy. Why is this my problem?

Optimism bias affects up to 80 percent of the population. Those who suffer from optimism bias frequently underestimate the odds of bad things happening to them, and it has a negative impact on their decisions.

They make poor choices.

You might be healthy now. If you expose yourself to Covid multiple times a year, then pretty soon you won't be healthy anymore.

That's how it works.

If Covid isn't over, why does everyone believe it is?

There's a number of cognitive biases distorting people's judgment that go beyond optimism bias. There's also [normalcy bias](#), [reactance](#), and [collective amnesia](#). Essentially, the public is trying to forget Covid.

There's only one way forward. It's clean air. It's a culture of masking. It's vaccines that actually eliminate transmission.

Everyone wants a cheap, easy way out.

There isn't one.

Why isn't this on the news?

If the public understood the risks of Covid, they would exercise a lot more caution in their lives. They would demand the same protections that the [elite have given themselves](#). They would sue their employers and maybe even the government for endangering them. They would continue to work from home, even if it caused the collapse of commercial real estate.

As the California Supreme Court [recently made clear](#), the government wants to avoid accountability at virtually any cost.

You know who owns most of our media outlets.

You can figure it out.

Okay, what's the solution?

Just to be extra clear, here they are:

- Educate and inform the public about their risks.
- Educate them about masks.
- Return to masking, especially in healthcare settings.
- Advocate for clean air, especially in public buildings.
- Advocate for better vaccines.

You might have to do a fundraiser for air purifiers or a better HVAC system. You might have to donate your time or money. You might have to learn the details of air flow and air changes per hour.

You might have to write your school board and politicians. You might have to call them. You might have to put your foot down with your boss, as diplomatically as possible.

Last year, we donated thousands of dollars to upgrade our school's air. We have difficult conversations with other adults.

Some of us get harassed, even assaulted. We get called names. We get accused of selling fear. We get our masks torn off. We lose friendships. We keep going, because we know what's at stake.

We deal with all of the discomfort.

We put in the heavy lifting.

You can help with this kind of work. You can look at my lists and learn about the principles of clean air.

Finally, stop getting angry at the messengers and advocates and demanding we do everything. We can't. This is a group effort. We need more people to join us, not nitpick us or critique the only solutions available. Stop letting the elite off the hook. Stop making excuses for them and then laying into the people who are trying to help.

If you don't like my solutions, offer something better. Stop advocating for complacency. Advocate for action. Act. If you're not going to act then, you know, at least leave us alone with our masks and air purifiers.

Please and thank you.

If you found this helpful, please consider supporting my work [here](#) or signing up over at [OK Doomer](#).

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Gary Bear (/null) @ · 8h

(/null) What I've never been clear on.. is the organ damage counted as long Covid? Or is everyone who catches it getting that silently and long Covid is a different issue altogether? 1 in 5 as far as i understand is symptomatic long Covid but are there numbers on how many have unknown damage that could cause problems later?

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